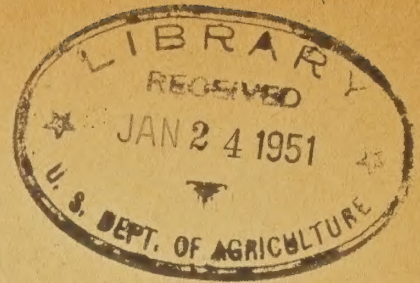


UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE  
Rural Electrification Administration



POWER PLUS

Georgia Co-op Gets Results with  
Power Use and Member Education

The ordinary pitchfork can do many useful chores around the farm. But it can't accomplish much hanging up in the barn. It has to be put to work first. Electricity is like that too. The availability of low cost power alone doesn't assure a better level of living for electric co-op members. It has to be used and used efficiently.

The Central Georgia Electric Membership Corporation of Jackson, Ga., has developed a highly effective program for bringing about this condition.

The directors and manager realized that the permanent success of a rural electric cooperative is achieved only when members fully understand their rights and responsibilities and take an active interest in the co-op's affairs. And they knew that if their 4,200 members were to derive from low cost electricity its maximum benefits, an enlightened member education and power use program was necessary.

PLANNING THE PROGRAM

To carry out such a program required organized planning. This the co-op leaders set about to do. Their first step was to hire a well qualified electrification adviser who would serve as a spark plug for the program. Under the direction of this electrification adviser, a power use committee was organized to assist management in developing a power use and member education program, and community leaders were selected to carry it out. To further implement the plan, the co-op took on the responsibility of training these leaders who, in turn, provided their neighbors with the needed information.

AREA ORGANIZED INTO UNITS

A co-op service area which consisted of portions of several counties was divided into 6 units. A leader from each of the 6 units was selected to serve on the power use committee. Before these selections were made, however, the electrification adviser spent considerable time in the area contacting local agricultural groups. Committee members were selected after conferences with agricultural leaders, the co-op manager and board of directors. Once the committee was set up it went about the business of selecting its own



chairman. Co-op directors are not members of this power use committee, but they do serve in an advisory capacity.

The next step in this educational program was to establish channels of information through which power use and co-op information could be carried to the members. The power use committee, together with the directors and co-op manager, sought the aid of local agricultural groups in selecting community leaders. After selection was made, the electrification adviser and a member of the power use committee visited each community leader. These contacts were made to enlist the support of these community leaders in pushing the program. In some communities, the leaders themselves sought help from others in the neighborhood and this resulted in some localities having 2 or 3 leaders. At last reports there were about 200 community leaders actively engaged in pushing the program.

This approach has definitely stimulated an increased interest among the members in the co-op and its program. Due to the active participation of these local leaders, it has been possible to reach directly an unusually large number of co-op members, thus providing them with educational information and power use services.

These leaders also work through civic and social clubs to which they belong, such as P-TA's, Farm Bureau clubs, home demonstration clubs, church clubs, etc. In these organizations, they reach many co-op members whom they do not have the opportunity to contact individually. They also reach non-members of the co-op and thus have a chance to tell the co-op's story in the community.

Backing up their efforts is a good publicity program headed up by the co-op's publicity chairman. This chairman works closely with the power use committee. Each unit also has its own publicity chairman. The result of this effort has been good coverage in both the local press and over the radio.

#### PUTTING THE PLAN TO WORK

After selection of the power use committee and community leaders, a "planning meeting" was held for each of the 6 units. The purpose of these meetings was to discuss the electrification needs of co-op members. The meetings were attended by the power use chairman, publicity chairman, unit leader, community leaders, co-op manager, electrification adviser, directors from counties represented, and educational leaders from counties represented -- home demonstration agents, county agents, county school superintendents, vocational home economics and agriculture teachers, Farm Bureau presidents, county newspaper editors, public health officers, welfare officers, Soil Conservation Service personnel, rural ministers, etc. Each of these meetings discussed not only the needs of co-op members but how the cooperative and other agencies represented could best meet these needs.

Once the needs of the co-op members were fully understood, training meetings were held for the leaders. Committee members and community leaders then rolled up their sleeves and went all out in an effort to satisfy these needs. Each



member of the Power Use committee and each community leader took an active part in pushing the program. Packets of informational material were given each leader. These kits contained "A Guide for Members of Rural Electric Co-ops" and other REA material on subjects to be stressed, as well as State Extension and State public health bulletins, a co-op rate card, kitchen party information and achievement record cards for county and community leaders. The entire program was put on a competitive basis with the co-op awarding prizes to those county and community leaders who achieved the most results.

Local appliance dealers cooperated in every respect. As a matter of fact, it was originally planned that three prizes would be given in each county for outstanding work done by community leaders. But when dealers showed such a willingness to cooperate, it was decided to give prizes to county leaders as well as community leaders. The educational programs were planned to end just before the co-op's annual meeting so the winners could be determined in sufficient time to present them with their prizes during the meeting. Of the 38 prizes awarded at the annual meeting, 29 were donated by the dealers. Dealers also helped in putting on the demonstrations.

The "achievement record" cards are broken down into 4 categories of operation -- educational, demonstration, participation and results. Under Educational, for instance, a certain number of points are awarded for each of the following: (1) Number of training meetings attended. (2) Number of reference books studied. (3) Number of meetings scheduled for demonstrations by electrification adviser, etc. Under Demonstration points are awarded for (1) Number of demonstrations held on a kitchen planning. (2) Number of wiring demonstrations held. (3) Number of demonstrations held on bathroom planning, etc. Under Participation points are awarded for (1) Number of dealers contacted in regard to activities of Power Use Program. (2) Number of people in community assisted in planning adequate wiring. (3) Number of home visits made by leader with adviser or alone, etc. And finally under Results points are given for such activities as (1) Number of kitchens improved. (2) Number of sinks installed. (3) Number of bathrooms installed. (4) Number of schools improving lighting, etc. (A sample of one of these achievement record cards is reproduced on page \_\_\_\_.)

#### PLAN GETS RESULTS

Has the program brought results? Let's look at the record.

One type of results you can measure in statistics and in dollars and cents. Some of these can be gleaned from a recent report issued by the co-op's power use committee. The committee reports that during the past year 24,294 people saw 972 demonstrations -- kitchen improvement, lighting, freezing and refrigeration, electric range, laundry, etc.

These people returned home convinced that here at least was the answer to many of their household problems. They were so convinced that they remodeled 652 kitchens. They also put in



115 sinks  
429 refrigerators  
400 ranges  
453 new cabinets  
475 new sets of light fixtures  
150 bathrooms  
199 automatic laundries  
138 water heaters  
199 pumps

In short, they came, they saw, and they concurred.

There are other results that are harder to measure, although equally important. These concern such matters as more enthusiastic and informed attendance at co-op meetings, greater cooperation between the management and the membership, and more friends for the co-op throughout its area. On all these counts, the manager and directors of the Central Georgia Co-op feel that their program has paid big dividends.

As a matter of fact, so much enthusiasm has been generated among co-op members through this power use and member education program that directors and managers of many neighboring co-ops have been encouraged to adopt similar programs.

#### LOOKING TO THE FUTURE

This member education and power use program is a continuing one. Already the manager, the board and the power use committee are hard at work planning the program for the year ahead.

This planning includes publicity over the local radio stations and news stories in the local press (county leaders will be responsible for these articles.) Other media being utilized to push the program are the co-op's newsletter, slides showing the activities of different power use projects, wiring demonstrations and exhibits on power use projects. The co-op is also planning to work out a public speaking contest with the local schools and provisions are being made to work with 4-H Clubs on the farm and home electric contest. Training meetings have been planned for county leaders to help them supervise activities in their county. Community leaders will also have training meetings for power use work during the year. And continued friendly relations with appliance dealers is being sought. Although the program to date has concerned itself primarily with the uses of electricity around the home, the co-op



plans to expand its power use plan to include electric equipment designed to stimulate farm production.

Member education in the principles of cooperation has also been stressed. The importance of working together has been emphasized time and again by community leaders. These leaders talk to the members about their business and distribute literature to them telling about the co-op and how it works. Leaders have sponsored a public speaking contest in all of the local schools on "Our Electric Cooperative." The winner of this contest will give his speech at the co-op's annual meeting.

This is a program that works both ways. It contributes to the members by lightening their household burdens and by stepping up farm production. It benefits the co-op by building a permanent, active member owned and controlled co-op. And it is a plan that is simple, workable and one which can be adopted by any rural electric system. It has worked to great advantage in Georgia and it should achieve equal success in any state.



